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MY FRIEND WILL

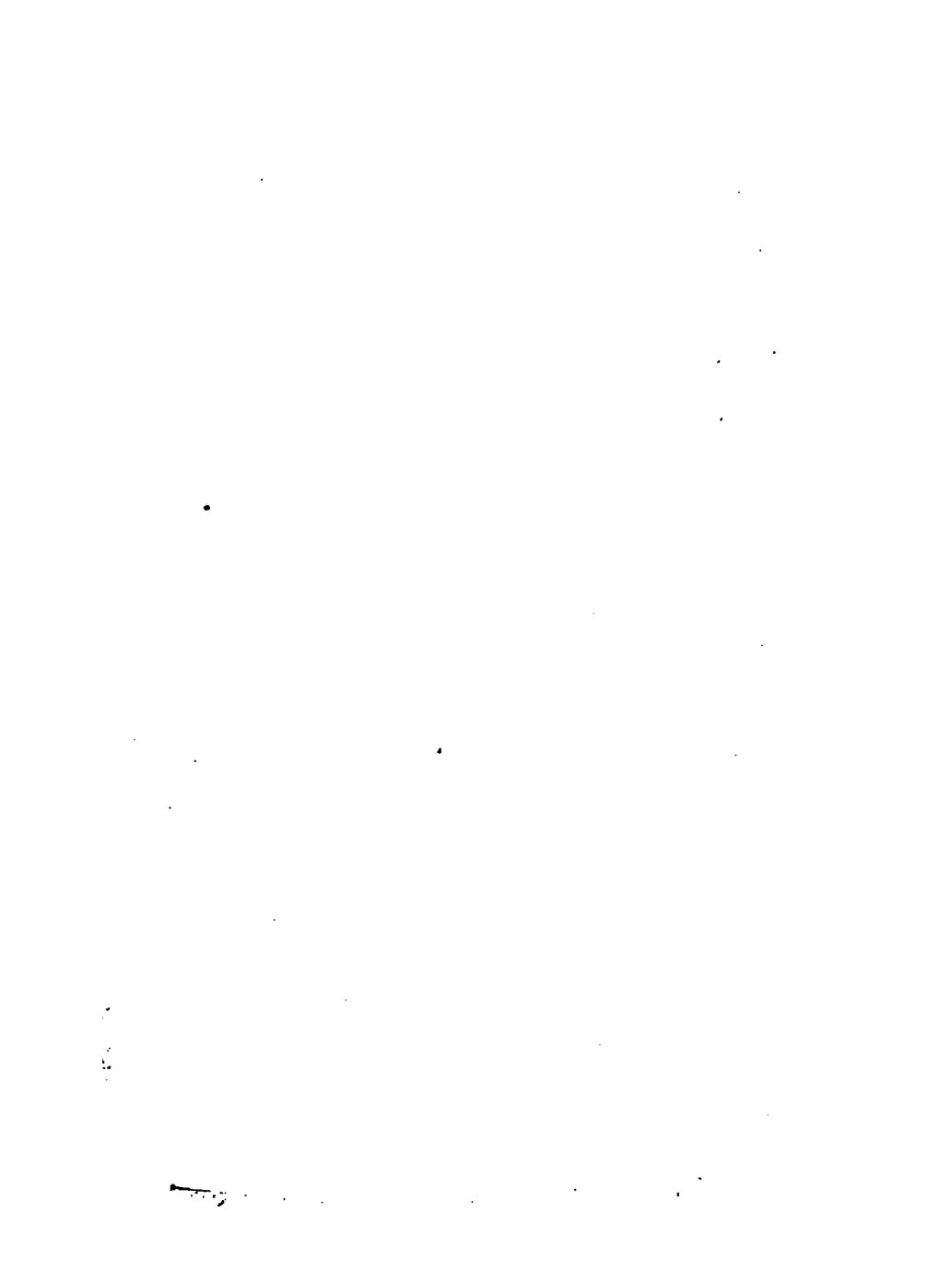
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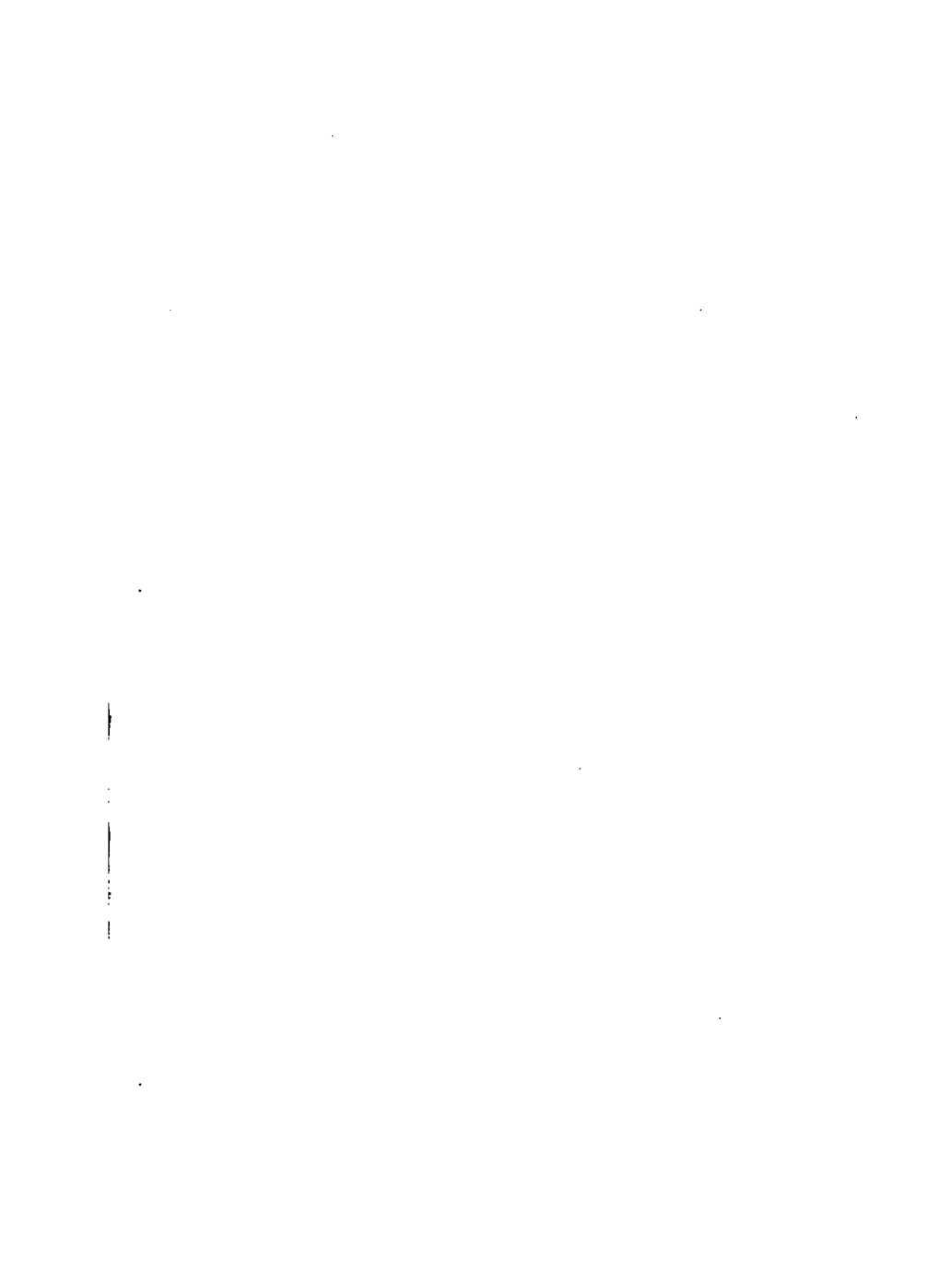


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My Friend Will





The Paralytic

My Friend Will

INCLUDING

"The Little Boy That Was"

By

CHARLES F. LUMMIS

Author of *"The Spanish Pioneers," "The Gold Fish
of Gran Chimú,"* etc.

SECOND EDITION



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To the Codicils of My Friend Will—
His Children:

BERTHA (Titauan), the First-Born

TURBESE, the Sunburst

JORDAN (Qyimu), the Little White Lion

KEITH, the Baby Troubadour, and

AMADO, "The Little Boy That Was"

"ONE THAT WAS PARALYZED"

(1888-1892)

*Pent in a prison of myself,
My soul steps thrice and turns about;
Or climbs upon its narrow shelf,
From bloodshot windows to glare out.*

*It beats upon the sullen clay —
The clay that breathes and still is dead.
It butts against the walls away,
And stamps around within my head.*

*The knotted arm that fought so well,
Is numb and knows to strike no more;
The legs that trudged the width of hell,
No longer lift me from the floor.*

*My very tongue is touched of death —
A dog is not so dumb as I
Who love, and cannot give it breath;
Who hate, and must unspoken lie.*

*And Will, the Captain left alone,
Sits dazed within his room to-day
And sees his adjutants disown
The orders once they sprang to obey.*

*But no! This mummy be my shell,
But not my fate! Betrayed, bereft
Of followers, in the citadel
The Master lives — the I am left!*

FOREWORD

THIS true leaf out of my life was turned* in hope that it might help some one else. No man could so much open his own covers for less.

Some say it was not wasted. From all over the world have come letters alleging that this story really did help.

The trouble is, so many people want not Help, but an Elevator; and I have never qualified to run one. All I can do is to stand at the head of the stairs and call down: "I climbed 'em—so can you." But no self-pitying person will ever crawl up. It needs a backbone—generally at the top end. No mollusks need apply.

There have been scores that climbed. But what particularly led me to go further, and to make this separate booklet, was the case of Edward Marshall, that deathless-plucky war correspondent, whose spine was paralyzed by a bullet at Las Guasimas in the Cuban War. While he was obeying the doctors and dying, as they advised, some one gave him My Friend Will, "just meantime." But then he said: "Lord,

*As the last chapter in "The King of the Broncos," published by Charles Scribner's Sons, who have generously consented to this reprint.

Foreword

if that duffer out there in New Mexico could do it—so can I!” And he did.

He wrote me later: “That story saved my life”—but that is a generous mistake. Marshall saved it. Any one else could not for him. And for these dozen years, against odds that would have killed a common man, he has been a useful citizen. If I was able to loan him my jack-knife when he wanted just one little edge in a man’s hand, I am glad I had the knife,—and glad to loan it now to any one else that can use it to *Whittle His Way Out*.

There is no being “carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease”—no more than there was in the time of the amiable Dr. Watts. There are not even automatic crutches. You have got to sweat over them yourself.

This story of what one man did is just a little saw for any one in the prisons of Fate; and it will cut the bars only *IF* he can use it. And the only way to use it is—to *USE* it, feeling that you are at least as much a man as *Our Friend Will*.

C. F. L.

Los Angeles

February, 1911



Alazan, "starting" with his "lively paralytic" on board

My Friend Will

I

UGH!" cried Dick, "is n't it horrible to see a man in that condition? I should think he'd want to die! What is he good for?"

The gentleman who hobbled past was not a pleasant sight, truly. Paralysis had smitten down one of his arms, and weighed upon a side of his face, and he moved very unsteadily on his crutch. But to me he was not horrible; and I answered the last question only with: "Well, that depends on what he *thinks* he is good for."

But it set me to thinking; for tall and handsome Dick was not the only one I had found with such heresy in him. So few of us ever find out what we really are "good for." And the outcome of my thinking was that perhaps I might just as well tell you the true story of my friend Will — or at least the outline

of a few years of his variegated life. His experience has taught me more than all the books I have ever read, and perhaps there are others who can learn a little from it, too.

To begin with, he was the hardest-headed fellow you ever saw; maybe "mulish" would not be too harsh a word. The trait brought him no end of troubles, though it is only fair to add that it generally got him out of them, too. His bulldog persistence in having his own way used sometimes to make me laugh; but he was so dead in earnest about everything that it was impossible to laugh at him for long.

You see, I knew him better than any one else did; and, while our intimacy made it impossible that I should not realize his faults, I was inclined to be charitable to them, and perhaps also to overestimate his virtues somewhat.

This great obstinacy of his was the first element in the curious true story I shall try to tell you; and a second was his physique, which was as hard as his head. He was hardly five feet seven inches, but sinewy and agile as a panther, and of really extraor-

dinary strength. All over his body the knots and strands of muscle stood out like whipcords. He never bragged of this; but he knew his strength, and was proud of it, and gloried in it.

He stripped 135 pounds, but he could lay his head on one chair and his heels on another and let a 200-pound man stand on his rigid belly for a full minute by the watch. He had made one straight-away walk of 3500 miles across the continent, and hundreds of shorter but considerable trips on foot, on horseback, and on the old high bicycles. He was a trained boxer, wrestler, acrobat, mountain-climber, and long-distance runner and canoe-man.

Of all the people I have ever known, no other got so much comfort and quiet joy out of the possession of a perfect body that answered every call upon it. It had been sorely tried, too, on the frontier, in hardships and dangers that never come near the average life; and it had never failed him. More than once — aye, more than a score of times — it had wrenched him loose from the very clutch of death. So it is not surprising that he had come to look upon it with

unlimited confidence. The vanity of a woman's beauty is no greater than the vanity of a man's strength.

At the time when the story begins, the obstinacy and the strength had an ample field. My friend was then twenty-eight years old, in the very perfection of health and vigor. He had bought an interest in a young daily newspaper. The small city in California where it was published was just beginning to "boom." Immigration from the East had barely started in that wonderful tide which swelled the population of that town from twelve thousand to fifty thousand in five years, and to three hundred and nineteen thousand in twenty years more; and worked almost equal miracles in all Southern California.

With his partners, Will had a double ambition — to upbuild the town and the paper in the right way. It was still rather a frontier city, and almost entirely in the hands of the rougher element. The saloons and gambling houses had everything their own way, and were so powerful that it was deemed hopeless to oppose them.

My friend's daily pitched in "by its lonesome" to

fight for a new order of things, and waged a relentless war on lawlessness. It was an unpleasant as well as an arduous three years, for the conflict was unremitting and to the knife. The element so long in power had no notion of yielding, and spared no pains to retaliate directly upon the editors.

But the paper, besides being right, had more "bulldog" than its adversaries; and municipal and State election after election scored invariably a new victory for the law-and-order party. Step by hard-fought step the gambling houses were closed, the saloons repressed and restrained, the most dangerous dives shut up; and, in a word, the swift-growing city became noted far and wide for its good order and clean administration.

Of course, only an infinitesimal part of this was my friend's doing; the votes that made such a striking change were those of the sober, intelligent people who had been coming in to settle. But it is probably fair to say that, without a fearless newspaper to lead off, the reforms could not have been accomplished so soon; and certainly none of the voters had to do with

the threats, persecutions, and assaults which were the constant share of the editors of the only paper which cared or dared to raise its voice.

This apparent straying from the story may give you to understand how a hard-headed young man with his impulses mostly in favor of decency—and maybe a little fondness for fighting in a good cause—would here become so interested as to make violent efforts. The paper, too, was pushing ahead; its circulation swelled* and its influence grew stronger daily, since people found that though it might sometimes be mistaken, it was never venal nor cowardly.

For his share of these results Will had worked like a Berserker. To him there was no day of rest in the year; and four hours, at most, in the twenty-four. He was up early, working at top tension all day long, and nearly all through the night. The last "form" had always gone down stairs and the presses were roaring, before he thought of leaving the office. He not only did not ask, but would not allow, any of his reporters to work one-half so hard. For months

*2700 daily, then; now 55,000.

at a stretch I have known him to work twenty-two, and even twenty-three hours, a day.

“What a fool!” you will say, and quite rightly.

But it did not seem so to him. He was not slaving for money — a thing he never worshipped — but working for love of his work. And you must remember, too, that with such a constitution he could do it! He was never tired — never! The months and the years did not abate his energy, but rather seemed to add to it. Other people broke down, but he —

Three years went by. The paper was so far in the lead that one of its presses alone would have bought out the whole establishment of either of its former rivals.

II

NOW my friend had a curious hint. His left forefinger "went to sleep" (as one's foot does) and stayed so for a week. Then his legs, then his head, then his trunk, began to have the same odd tingling numbness. But he took it rather as a poor practical joke on him than as a matter to worry over.

Warnings had been showered on him for years by his friends and by his many acquaintances among the doctors; but one might just as well have talked to a steel spring. He would laugh with good-natured tolerance, and say: "Oh, yes, I know; but there are exceptions to every rule, and a constitution like mine thrives on it. I've been at it all these years, and never felt better in my life." Then his chest would take its four-and-a-half inch expansion, as if to prove his words. Even now, when the telegraph editor said to him one night, apropos of the "sleepy" finger: "Mr. Will, if you don't let up, you are going to be

paralyzed!" my friend looked at him in unfeigned admiration.

"Do you mean to tell me, Bates," he cried impetuously, knotting his left arm till the biceps actually split the sleeve, "you mean to say that when I tell this arm to do so and so it will disobey me? By heaven, I would like to see it!" And there was a glare in his eyes as if he would make short work with such unheard-of mutiny.

A week later he did see it.

That strange numbness kept coming; at times creeping so close about the heart that the strong thumps were like to cease; but he felt perfectly well that evening, as he drew up to his own fireside for a moment after supper — and suddenly toppled to the floor. The next thing he knew he was lying on the sofa, and a tearful face bent over him.

"Take it off me!" he gasped, for he seemed to be held down by a weight of tons.

There was only a sad shake of the head for answer.

"But I will get up!" he cried, the old combativeness coming back to the dazed brain.

"Don't!" begged the watcher; but he began to heave and strain till the veins knotted in his forehead and throat, and every muscle was rigid as steel.

He had wrestled with the strongest men, he had fought with main strength for his life, but never before with so desperate an effort as now to throw off a weight no one else could see.

After twenty minutes' struggle he did get up, weak and trembling, but victorious.

In a few moments his exultation fell at a terrible discovery. His left arm had mutinied. Struggle as he would, he could not move a muscle of it.

I leave it to you, with what you know of him by this time, whether it was a blow to this young athlete to find himself — paralyzed! The perfect body now a wreck, the perfect health a broken dream, and he a thing for people to point at pityingly!

But no one ever knew from him what he did feel. Even to me, his best friend, he said only, "Ah, old boy, tough luck; no?" That first glimpse I got of his face he was very pale, but his lips were set, and there was more token of fire than water in his eyes.

“Do! I’ll go to the wilderness and live outdoors till I’m well,” he said; and off he packed to New Mexico, though barely able to waddle. “Medicine? No, indeed! My constitution is doctor enough, if it has half a chance—and I’ll try to give it that half chance now. Me to the old Santa Fé Trail!”

III

FROM first to last he refused all doses and treatment; which indicates that, despite that disaster in the brain, the skull retained most of its hardness.

Some very lovely Spanish people in the Territory had been his friends for years, and now they gladly welcomed him to their hacienda, a day's ride from the railroad. They would have put him to bed and nursed him, for he could scarcely walk, and his speech was more or less affected; but that was not his notion of the necessary treatment. "In bed," he said, "I can't get away from myself; and that is what I have to do, or go crazy."

Every morning he sallied out into the sagebrush to escape himself by hunting. I fear it was a rather ludicrous sight, this tottering, wobbly Nimrod, clumsily wielding the gun with one hand, and missing far more rabbits than he killed, and often dropping under a bush in sheer exhaustion. But no one laughed at it,

except himself. Indeed, I have seen friendly eyes turn misty on a sudden, when he "guyed" himself about it.

As the weeks went on, he got further and further from the house; at first a few hundred yards wore him out. Juan Rey and the other boys had more and more jack-rabbits and cottontails to dress; Will was getting steadier on his legs, and already could use the light shot-gun skilfully with his one hand. He carried it on his shoulder, grasping it at the guard and "throwing down," just as one would a six-shooter.

His natural amusement would have been writing, but now that was out of the question; for on top of his brain there seemed to be an actual iron floor, against which his thoughts bumped their heads in vain. Sometimes it lifted a bit, then it would sink, lower and heavier, till it seemed about to crush out his very life.

So the evenings he passed with the family, playing quaint Spanish games, learning sweet Spanish songs — and something of the Spanish heart which he will never forget. If misfortune had taught him but that

one lesson of the brotherhood of man, I am not sure it would not have been worth while; for I must say of my friend that before this he had been very ignorant and bigoted in such things.

With March came "lambing-time," and Will went up to the sheep-camps and lived that hard life for months, keeping the shepherds in meat with his gun, and, at a pinch, working as hard as any of them. Sometimes after chasing a perverse lamb he would fall down, so weak was he, and lie several minutes before he had strength to rise; but then he would up again and at it.

Sure, it was a great life. Up there at 7,000 feet on the north flank of Mt. San Mateo, March is what you might call cold. The "house" was built up of slabs of sandstone, laid roughly without mortar, "more holes than stones," as Will said. Don Amado, the princely friend, told me only the other day that he recently saw the little corner where Will chinked a few feet with mud gathered up with his one fist during the rare thaws. The bed was a couple of sheepskins, with a couple of Navajo blankets, on the



The one-handed hunter and one day's bag of jackrabbits

dirt floor. There were no windows, and the door had nothing to shut. A drivelling rivulet had a pool filled up near by; and Will got an ice chisel from Albuquerque, and every morning chopped through eight or ten inches of ice to baptize himself with the morning bath, which has always been one of his gospels, and is one of the reasons why he is still alive. When the ice got too thick for even the ice chisel, the drifts of powdered snow made a good rubbing-down. The Mexican sheep herders had their opinion of this crazy American that ran out, stark, at four in the morning for this bath and ran back to a rubbing with a gunny sack—and this opinion played an important part later in his fortunes; for even hired assassins were a little bit uncertain of aim when it came to beating the Gringo devil that bathed out doors at ten below zero.

Much of the time was away from the little central camp, and out with the various flocks where there was no shelter; but the semicircle of juniper boughs made a windbreak. And the snow often came down a few feet in the night, to add to the warmth of the

blankets — this is no joke, for nothing is warmer than snow for a covering, if you have the right intermediaries.

And in the wilderness camps, or in the little stone sieve of a "house," the juniper camp-fires crackled every night, no matter how fierce the winter was outside. And some herder would have his *bijuela* — the jewsharp of the wilderness, made by bending a twig a couple of feet long into a bow, with a piece of linen thread, and played exactly like the jewsharp of our boyhood. And what quantity of songs of the wilderness they taught him! In later days he has "canned," with Mr. Edison's wonder-working machine, over eight-hundred of the old folk-songs of the Southwest. But among the dearest of his *repertoire* are those simple ditties he learned around the wintry camp-fires of New Mexico nearly a quarter of a century ago.

IV

ONE day it became necessary to send a freight-wagon fifty miles to the interior for supplies; and there was no one who could be spared to take it. Don Amado was in a quandary.

"Let me go," said Will.

"You!" cried Don Amado, in horror. "Do you take me for a murderer? What could you do?"

"I could try," was Will's answer; and he seemed really glad to be allowed, after long refusal, the dubious privilege.

He scrambled to the high seat of the old Studebaker, tied the reins short at the back of his neck — so that he could guide the horses by a tug on either line with his one hand — shook off the brake, and sent the broncos flying down the hill.

I fancy Will had some doubts about the outcome himself; but he did n't "let on."

He steered the shaky vehicle (half held together with baling wire, which was then Chief of Repairs in New Mexico), and its wild span of broncos, over the rocky trail, crossed a very dangerous and difficult

arroyo, and, after many troubles, finally reached Acebache.

Next day he had to start back in a wild storm, bringing six hundred pounds of corn and the meat of a steer, which he had assisted to round up in the mountains, and butcher and dress.

The storm had sent down a flood. In the bad arroyo the wagon stuck, and the water was rising swiftly. So the one-armed Jehu had to drag to the bank, with his right hand and teeth, the three two-hundred-pound sacks of corn and the ponderous quarters of beef — and he did it! Then, with his bowie-knife, he dug away the bank until the tired horses could pull the wagon out to safety. Then he reloaded his cargo, and, at three o'clock in the morning, came clattering in triumph up to the camp at San Miguel.

The superstitious shepherds began to look upon him as a wizard; but my friend found in these successes food for something deeper than vanity. He was learning a vital lesson — that he was still Good for Something, after all. If he could do this, then something else; and he began to find a keen delight

in overcoming the obstacles that naturally beset a cripple.

One very trifling conquest, just now, seemed to give him a disproportionate encouragement and buoyancy. He was a sad smoker, and, in the wilderness, had no recourse except the little brown-paper cigarettes of the Mexicans. At first the boys rolled them for him; but one day he cried, "No, if I can't smoke without help, I won't smoke at all!"

Then he looked sorry he had said it, for he was a fellow of his word, and every one needs two hands for the cigarette-making. Rather anxiously he took a paper and a pinch of granulated tobacco. H'm! Not so impossible after all! For, twisting partly with his right thumb and forefinger and partly with his lips, lo! he had a rude but smokable roll. In a little while he grew expert at it, and for years was known all over the Southwest as "The Americano that rolls cigarros with one hand." And once in a while he does it yet — just to make sure he can "come back."

From this point he made rapid progress. No hunter in western New Mexico killed more game; and

he began to take long walks, and horseback rides of hundreds of miles, and to carry his big old-fashioned camera and glass plates into all the corners of the frontier, and to make such intimate pictures of the Southwest as no one else has ever succeeded in getting. There was a good deal of hardship in it, and some danger. Several of his photographs were made at the point of the six-shooter. And one long afternoon while he "shot" the successive phases of a savage ceremonial, with the big Colt cocked on top of his camera where the one hand could drop the shutter-bulb and clutch it, fearless Don Ireneo, and stanch Tircio, each with a .44 in each hand, helped stand off the mob—which certainly didn't "look pleasant." He developed all the plates himself—often getting ugly cuts in the one-handed work—and made many thousand prints a year.

He was now beginning to get back some of his old-time vigor—thanks to determination and outdoors—and as for handiness, quite ceased in time to miss the lost member. For that matter, a great many strangers never noticed his misfortune, for what he

could not help himself in, he preferred to let alone. I remember that in the beginning he often went without meat, if he could not cut it himself; never would he let any one cut it for him. But by now he could handle the toughest steak on the frontier, as plenty of cow-camps can testify.

A few months later a second but milder shock threw him back very seriously; and, quite as hard to be borne, a strange turn of fortune left him without a cent in the world.

I rather expected to see him weaken then; but he only shut his lips and went to work with a certain fierceness, but no longer blindly. He had already learned something; and perhaps these misfortunes were really a good thing; for they gave his inborn pugnacity a worthy foe and a beneficial struggle. The "floor" was still in his head, but a little more buoyant; and as nothing else seemed feasible, he began literary work, a very little at a stretch.

For the next two years my friend had what you might fairly call a hard time. Any steady or confining work was not to be thought of, and what writing he

could do brought very small returns, and far between. Sometimes he had even to borrow postage stamps to send off his articles. But he seemed never to get blue, and never "ceased continuing."

Between writings—and along with them, for many were not done at the desk in the little adobe room, but in midnight trains along thousands of miles of the Santa Fé, and by lonely camp-fires, and to the jolt of a trotting bronco on the mountain trails—he tramped and rode over all the wildest corners of the Southwestern Wonderland; always with the gun, the huge old camera, and a bandanna full of other supplies. He made thousands of photographs, broke twenty-odd broncos from wild beasts to chums, cooked for himself by the camp-fire or on the top of a tiny heating stove where the frying pan had to have one side pounded in to fit against the stove pipe lest it fall to the floor. And his friends did n't mind "coming miles to see the dimple" in that frying pan, and absorb its fruits, and to see him flop the omelet or the pancake to the ceiling and catch it t'other-side-up as it came down—one friend made a beautiful photograph of



"Breaking" Alazan the second time

the pancake almost at the rafters, but unfortunately this is lost. There really was not much of anything which this contented hermit and rather lively paralytic could not do, after a fashion. He not only shaved with his one hand (and not with a "safety," either) in his bachelor adobe, but anywhere else. To this day the trainmen on the Santa Fé remember the man who waits for the crookedest stretch of track and the fastest running to take his shave—a sort of test whether he is ready yet to be Oslerized. And once, just to see what could be done, he shaved on horseback, while Alazan trotted steadily along the rocky trail. There are hundreds in the Territory who still remember his roping and riding and breaking the fiercest wild horses; and how he crawled into the mountain-lion's cave a hundred feet, his one hand occupied with the single-barrelled shot-gun, and a long torch of the choky buckhorn cactus held in his mouth for light. Very fortunately the lion was not at home. And what Don Amado said when Will emerged, coughing and muddy—you might ask Don Amado, for I would not dare to print it here.

V

AT last he left blessed San Mateo, and the Spanish friends who had been as a whole Congress of Mothers to him, and went down to live in the Indian Pueblo of Isleta, to study these wonderful Indians. He became very fond of these brown neighbors, and they of him; he was adopted into the tribe and learned the language and the beautiful folk-lore—and the still more beautiful heart of a primitive people. In all his wanderings he never found a gentler neighboring and friendliness than in these years among the Tigua; and he never learned more of anything interesting or useful in any six years among much more famous teachers.

A band of Mexican fanatics and desperadoes were not so brotherly. It began with his photographing of the Penitente's crucifixion at the point of the gun; and then he was so foolish as to try to help bring to justice some of the brotherhood who had committed six murders, beginning with poor old Barrett and

coming up to Provencher — and which scored No. 7 on Will. New Mexico is one of the safest countries in the world, to-day; but in those days it was not so salubrious for meddling outsiders. For a couple of years this hunter knew for himself how it felt to be hunted, and to have a big bounty on his scalp. They did n't like to face an insane person addicted to cold baths and of considerable predestination with the trigger; but hired pot-hunters stalked him for a couple of years. Many times on lonely trails he was shot at from ambush; but whether it was partly his own watchfulness as to suspicious trees and rocks, or partly the superstitious nervousness of the hunters, or just mere luck — the rifle balls did n't "take." At last, disgusted with the inconclusive rifle, an imported thug ambushed him in the Pueblo as he stepped outside his own door on St. Valentine's eve, and so riddled him with two loads of buck-shot at twenty yards that it is a miracle he refrained from joining Provencher and Barrett and the others over Yonder. He treasures some of the lead yet — inside. And the only outward, visible token of his last Valentine is a dimple — just

where it was needed. After that, these superstitious fellows decided that he bore a charmed life; and they not only let him alone, but really came to like him when he rode back into their fastnesses to ask them if they had any more shooting to do.

Then there came one day a letter with the deadliest news a letter could tell. And a flood of fire roared through his head, and he rolled from his chair.

This third paralytic shock seemed to have finished even the *cabezudo* (hard-head), as the Indians called him. It left him unable to stand or to speak a word. He could move only by dragging himself along the floor upon his belly with his right elbow, like a crippled seal or a dog with three legs broken. He was on the very verge; had he "lost his grip" even for a little while, it would have been all up with him. But he did n't. The bulldog and the mule stood by him; and he kept alive, to the bewilderment of the doctors.

What time he lay in the hospital at Santa Fé, cared for tenderly by the blessed Sisters, was probably the crisis of all. But he held his unwilling mind by the throat, and made it serve him. Story after story,

verse after verse, he wrung out from the oppressed head — and so kept from going mad. He even wrote for the humorous papers a great many sketches and jingles and quips, funny enough to make the public laugh, when he was furthest from laughing himself. The files of "Life," "Puck," "Judge," and "Time," and others of that sort, in that epoch bear witness.

And it was at this time that his gospel of self-mastery crystallized — as in the verses at the beginning of this story, and in these which follow:

CAPTAIN I

*I have to ask no courtesies of Fate,
Nor plead for quarter at her reeking hands.
My only fate am I; and soon or late
It is and must be but myself that stands.*

*Behind the coward skirts of Circumstance
I would not hide (if ever one be hid);
For man is more than putty thumb'd by Chance —
For good or evil — what we are we did.*

*Nor stormer nor betrayer Fate can be;
None else but I can conquer my redoubt.
E'en I am more than all can happen me —
For happenings but hammer from without.*

*The citadel is small, but 't is mine own,
Impregnable unless surrendered o'er;
Its gateway opens to Will's key alone —
A key I keep on my side of the door.*

But — like some other people — he found it not always easy to keep his own gospel.

How he hated this wretched hulk! How his eyes flashed if any stranger presumed to look at him when he was taken out in the wheel chair! Pity him, would they? Well, he would fool them — and the doctors, too!

“How are you, old man?” asked a friend, during this crisis. Will reached for his scratch-pad, tore off a leaf on which a verse was growing, and wrote:

“All right. And bigger than anything that can happen to me. All these things are outside my door, and I've got the key. Thank you.”

I came across this paper afterward, and saved it. When I have any bad luck myself, it rather does me good to look at it.

But the hospital and the wheel chair — and, above all, the second floor — were a little too much even for



*The little 'dobe room in the pueblo where "Will"
"bached it"*

Will's resistance; so directly he got transferred to a little old adobe whose floor was almost level with the ground, and where he could crawl out over the low threshold and play with the gravel and feel the touch of Mother Earth again, instead of floors; and while there is nothing like the Sisters for nurses — there is nothing for Doctor like the blessed ground! And the "long Lane which had no turning" (that was the owner's name, and he was Secretary of the Territory) had ground to spare, and gravel and apple trees, and even soil fertile in those heavenly mudworms which were associated with Will's youth, and the chickweed patch back of Gran'pa's house.

VI

A FEW weeks later he watched with hungry eyes the goings and comings of gallant Perfecto, the Secretary's horse—winner of many a famous race. One day he wrote on his tablet (the only tongue left him, you know):

"Lend me. I want to ride."

"You?" cried Lane. "Are you crazy? What would you do on a horse like that?"

"Put me on and see," answered the pencil scratches.

It took a long argument, that spoiled several sheets of paper; but at last the six-foot Secretary lifted Will bodily into the saddle, tucked his left foot into the stirrup, and away he went. Perfecto was a whirlwind; but, after all, he was nothing to the cyclone of the broncos, and no casualties occurred.

Next day, riding out again, my friend met a Mexican boy, carrying a string of trout. Whew! Then his eyes did brighten! There was nothing on earth he loved quite so well as trout, ever since the four-year-old days when Gran'pa carried him along the New

Hampshire trout-brooks and talked to him even as he fished. Now Will reined up in front of the lad and grunted, "N-h?" (which was as near as he could come to articulate sound), joggling his chin forward at the fish.

The boy looked puzzled; but he was too much a boy to be stupid long. "N-h?" could mean only "Where'd you get them?" So he promptly replied, "*El rito arriba*"

Trout in the Santa Fé Cañon? H'm!

At four o'clock next morning my friend and Perfecto were clattering past the hospital, and something suspiciously like a rod stood whip-fashion in one of the tall boots.

When the sun came up they had made ten miles. A horse could go no farther up the cañon, for the cliffs. Will picked out a leafy spot, wriggled about in the saddle until he over-balanced and fell to the ground, alighting on that hard head and sound arm. He tied Perfecto's reata to a tree, and the rest of the day was dragging himself on his belly over the rough ground, fishing.

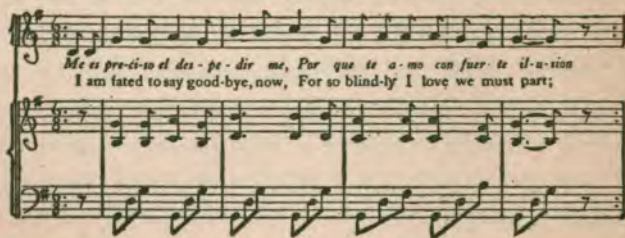
At sunset he crawled up a half-fallen tree, pulled Perfecto to him, scrambled over into the saddle with infinite difficulty, and rode home — with twenty-nine trout in his basket.

That sort of thing was repeated daily for about four months. Then the helpless leg began to have a bit of life, so that, by taking hold of something, Will could rise. What pleased him quite as much was that he became able again to hum the Spanish songs he had collected with such labor, which had seemed utterly wiped out by the third shock.

And at last, one blessed autumn day, as he rode up the cañon humming the air of

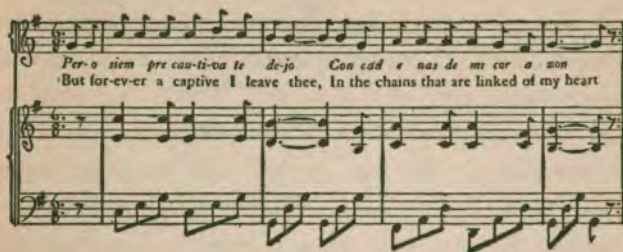
“*Me es preciso el despedirme,*”

he suddenly heard himself singing the words:



My Friend Will

43



*Al salir de esta casa
Saldremos con honor;
Al salir de esta casa
Saldremos con honor.
Adios, adios, adios!
Señores ya yo me voy.
Adios, adios, adios!
Señores ya yo me voy.*

*As from this house we sally,
With honor we sally so;
As from this house we sally,
With honor we sally so.
Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!
My masters, for now I go.
Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye!
My masters, for now I go.*

This song "*Me Es Preciso*" (And I Must Go) recorded and translated by Charles F. Lummis and harmonized by Arthur Farwell.

It was just up by the old *era* — the same hardpan threshing floor of primitive people ever since the day of Abraham, and the same threshing machine — a flock of goats running round and round the circle and trampling out the grain with their recurrent hoofs. And the Mexican threshers have told me that he looked like a ghost, and not like the brown-tanned man they had watched for months spurring up the cañon. But he said nothing to them, beyond the accustomed nod and grunt. I presume he wished to; but there was One at home who had a right to the first words, and he wheeled and rode back in silence.

“What on earth makes his face shine so?” queried the Secretary’s family as he rode into the yard.

But no one knew until he was safe in the room with the One and burst like a bomb with:

“I can talk!”



*The Mexican "threshing machine" where "Will's" speech
came back*

VII

AFTER that the tide turned. He came in time to walk and speak as well as ever, though the dwindled left arm still hung lifeless at his side.

He returned to the pueblo, to his hunting and exploring, his making of pictures and breaking of broncos. He even built a couple of log houses for friends who had taken a crazy notion to plant a home on the top of a ten-thousand-foot peak; felling the trees himself, peeling, hewing, and placing them, making tin roofs, and all that sort of thing. His writings found a market now, so the miseries of utter poverty disappeared; while his studies of the lore and language of his neighbor Indians, and of other tribes, and of the documentary history of the ancient Southwest, gave him a place in science.

The many and great changes that followed, now, in bewildering succession, were more important to Will at the time than to this record. Some were good

and some were not; and some that were loveliest then turned out worst, and some that were hardest came somehow to serve him to advantage long. Some seemed merely Fate. Between them, anyhow, they kept him spurred; and the advantage, too, of being able to work with his head and his hand was really encouraging. By now he had grown powerful again. With doing double duty, the right arm had grown an inch about the biceps, and seemed to have added to its own strength that of the lost left.

At last on the fifth of July, three years and seven months to the day from the first shock, the wonder of it all befell. It had been a long day's ride across the llano, and wound up at the little adobe under the giant cottonwoods in Bemalillo. Here one of the little girls of the long-ago Christmas, when Will first came into the heart of a Spanish home, had come to her own nest; and supper-time rang joyfully with memories of that decade past, and of the Yankee wanderer floundering with less than three words of Spanish in a home where none spoke any other tongue. And after the table-talk of the dear old days, and with its

warmth on them, Will and his wife came to their own room. And as she knelt beside his chair, saying nicer things than he deserved, she suddenly clutched him to keep him from falling, for he was white and staring.

For a few minutes there was great consternation in the room, and then a rapid change; and Spanish friends and husband and wife were all tangled in a muddle of hugs and tears and exclamations.

And what do you imagine had scared him so?

Merely this — his unthinking eyes had taken note that his hand was stroking his wife's hair. Well? Yes, but it was the left hand — the withered arm that in three years and seven months had never moved a muscle, nor had a sensation!

The little clot of blood in the brain had wholly moved on, at last, and left my friend a well man again.

VIII

ALITTLE over a year later I found him on the top of the Misti—that 19,300 peak which guards the beautiful city of Arequipa in Peru—and not only up there, but trotting around with the same old camera, and making pictures of the crater, while the Indians who were supposed to carry the burden were sitting down and trying to catch their breath. He was not as tough as I had known him years before—but evidently good enough for practical purposes, and indeed “worth several dead men yet,” as he remarked.

All this was many years ago; and nowadays everything seems to go swimmingly with my friend. He is, perhaps, about as hard-headed as ever, but he has found good uses for persistence. And he learned it all in these cruel years in New Mexico, as he himself admits.

“The great lesson it taught me,” he says, “is that man was meant to be, and ought to be, stronger and more than anything that can happen to him. Circumstances, ‘Fate,’ ‘Luck,’ are all outside; and if he cannot always change them, he can always beat

them. If it had not worked its way into my broken brain that Captain I held the fort; that the only key was my own volition, and that unless I wilfully surrendered, nothing could take the citadel, I should have been dead long ago. If I could n't have what I wanted, I decided to want what I had — and that simple philosophy saved me. Yes, and it has turned my most terrible misfortunes into good, right along. My paralysis, for instance, was the luckiest thing that ever befell me. It not only turned me to my proper work, and in a larger field, but it taught me what I was good for, and how to make the best of things — myself included."

Not long ago he summed it thus, amid some reminiscent verses:

*From the Andes' head to the desert's heel,
Every level of life and land —
All have been glad to teach,
I have been quickened to feel;
Joyed and suffered and learned by each —
Learned from pain and the Face of Death,
Learned by the lives I have given breath;
Taught my Sorrows to lick my hand,
My Pleasure to know the rein.*

This is not meant to be a biography of this boyhood friend of mine. He has had a curious career, but I have told you the things that specially relate to the text we started with. He is past fifty now, and still able to play twenty hours a day—for now he has learned not to hurry nor worry; so it is n't work. And having long ago played Probate Court for himself and proved his own Will, is now happiest in considering the codicils thereto. I judge that in the main they are of the same tenor as the original Will, and that none of them will ever be broken. And if he has had as hard experiences since, they have not been so alone. "Immortality?" says he: "Let's take it while we can! Whatever comes later—to the good! But meantime, children are the instalment immortality—and every year of every one of them is worth an æon later; and we live again in them, and for them and by them. If Ponce de Leon had been wise, he would not have lost his life seeking a fountain of perpetual youth in water. Blood is thicker and better—and no fable. I thought I knew what life was—and had industriously turned it inside out to discover,

and with a rather unusual variety of opportunities. But I didn't know a thing about it until the little teachers showed me. And I guess I did n't even know until I stood this side the door through which one of my little ones had passed away from me."

I have taken these experiences of Will's a good deal to heart, seeing how much good they have done him; and you can understand why I do not look at paralytics or other "unfortunates" as some people do. Whether they are "good for anything" to the world or themselves depends upon what they think about it. Will was as badly off as the worst of them, and he has continued to be a decidedly active and not wholly useless person. But perhaps he will object to my so free use of him to point a moral?

N — no, I'm quite sure not. He rarely finds fault with what I do — and never in company. In fact, such close friends are we that I sometimes affectionately call him "My Will."

1

2



The Little Boy Who Was, Amado Bandelier Lummis

The Little Boy That Was*

THE Den is dim this month. It is at best but room for the Lion's passing thought; and to-day his thought paces up and down a narrow bound. He has just closed the eyes of one he hoped should one day do that office for him. He has just surrendered to the incorrupting flames the fair husk of what had been his tawny-maned cub; the lad he would have made a Man; the lad who *was* a Man at six — an old-fashioned, gentle, fearless little knight, whose first thought was always for others; whose last words, in the agony for breath, were "Yes, please"; a lad so big-eyed and slender and girlish-sweet that one half thought Nature had misdressed him, until one noted that his undefiant eye never fell before any

*From "In the Lion's Den" (editorial in Out West magazine), January, 1901

eye, nor ever wavered; that he never lied nor dodged, nor shirked his fault, nor skulked from its consequence. And when an eighteen-year-old bully made to duck his pet kitten, he went white and snatched a club and fairly awed the burly tormentor off the field. Love, we are born into; but to win respect is victory for a lifetime, long or short. It is well with the boy. But the Lion had not cubs to spare.

We least discuss the thing that is next us all. After our coming, our only unanimous share is to go. Health, love, happiness — these are for many, perhaps for most, but at least some fail of them. And we talk of these matters every day. But there is one surety for every mother's son — that he shall in his time rest him in the lap of the dark All-Mother. And of her we think and speak only upon compulsion, and with a shiver as if she were our Foe, and as we could dodge her by evading her name.

The Lion has known Death in many forms and in many lands, and many times thought to be elect of it; and whether seen or apprehended, it has never seemed to him hideous. In a decent world, nothing which is

universal and inevitable can be hideous. Its settings may be cruel; but Death itself is not hard — as probably all know who have often faced the gray Change. Nor have I ever seen one die afraid. The swift pat of a bullet, the sweet drowsiness of mortal cold, the queer, weak content of an unstanch'd bleeding, the mechanical halt of breath in a peaceful bed — none of that is hard. It is easy to die. It is not even an effort.

To live is work. Inside us, but without our mandate, our ceaseless navvies of heart and lungs toil over their unbroken tread-mill. That two-pound valve — the only muscle which is independent of its landlord's will — lifts more in a lifetime than its two hundred-pound owner could. And all this strange, involuntary, tremendous enginery travails without rest that we may be things that beyond it all shall, for ourselves, toil and hope, win and lose, love bitter-sweet, and be bereaved even as we love; that we shall have our faiths and our doubtings, our ideals and our disillusion, our joys and our agonies. If it were as cruel to die as to be left, the world would be a mad-house. But it is no trouble to die.

But we who must for now stay this side that impenetrable door our hopes have passed—how shall we do? Shall we beat upon its unechoing panel, and cry aloud? Shall we lie dumb beside it, useless to them that are still unushered as to him who has passed through? Shall we treat it as a special trap laid by Providence to pinch Us? Is it an affront and robbery? A personal spite of heaven upon our marked head? Shall we be broken, or bitter, or hardened?

Or shall we go on the more like men, for having now all man's burdens, in the ranks that need us? Shall we envy them that are spared our pain, or find new sympathy for the innumerable company that have tasted the cup before us, and the greater hosts that shall taste it after? Shall we "won't play" because the game is against us? Or play it the more steadily and the more worthily for very love and honor of the dead? These are new questions the Lion has to ask himself. Perhaps it will do no harm to ask them out loud. For there are others at the same cold black-board even now.

They who have lived and suffered should be able

to understand the springs of human action. I can comprehend how men lie, steal, murder. Even how men, for a child's death, curse God — and accurse all in His image that are bounden to them. They see it that way — and man always justifies himself somehow for whatever he does. But, from another point of view, that all seems impudent and cowardly. If a man cared really more for his child than for himself, should it not occur to him that the only thing he can do now for that promoted soul is to be worthier to have begotten it? To be a wiser man, a juster man, a tenderer man; a little gentler to the weak, a little less timorous of "advantage," a little more unswerving in duty as I see it, a little more self-searching to be sure I see it straight — what else can I do now for my little boy? It is good to remember; but the vitality of remembering is to Do for its sake.

How to "bound" God, north, south, east, and west, like sing-song children in the geography, I have not the remotest idea. I know nothing of Him, except that He is the Best I Know. But perhaps we can all agree that the nearest we futile mites ever come to the

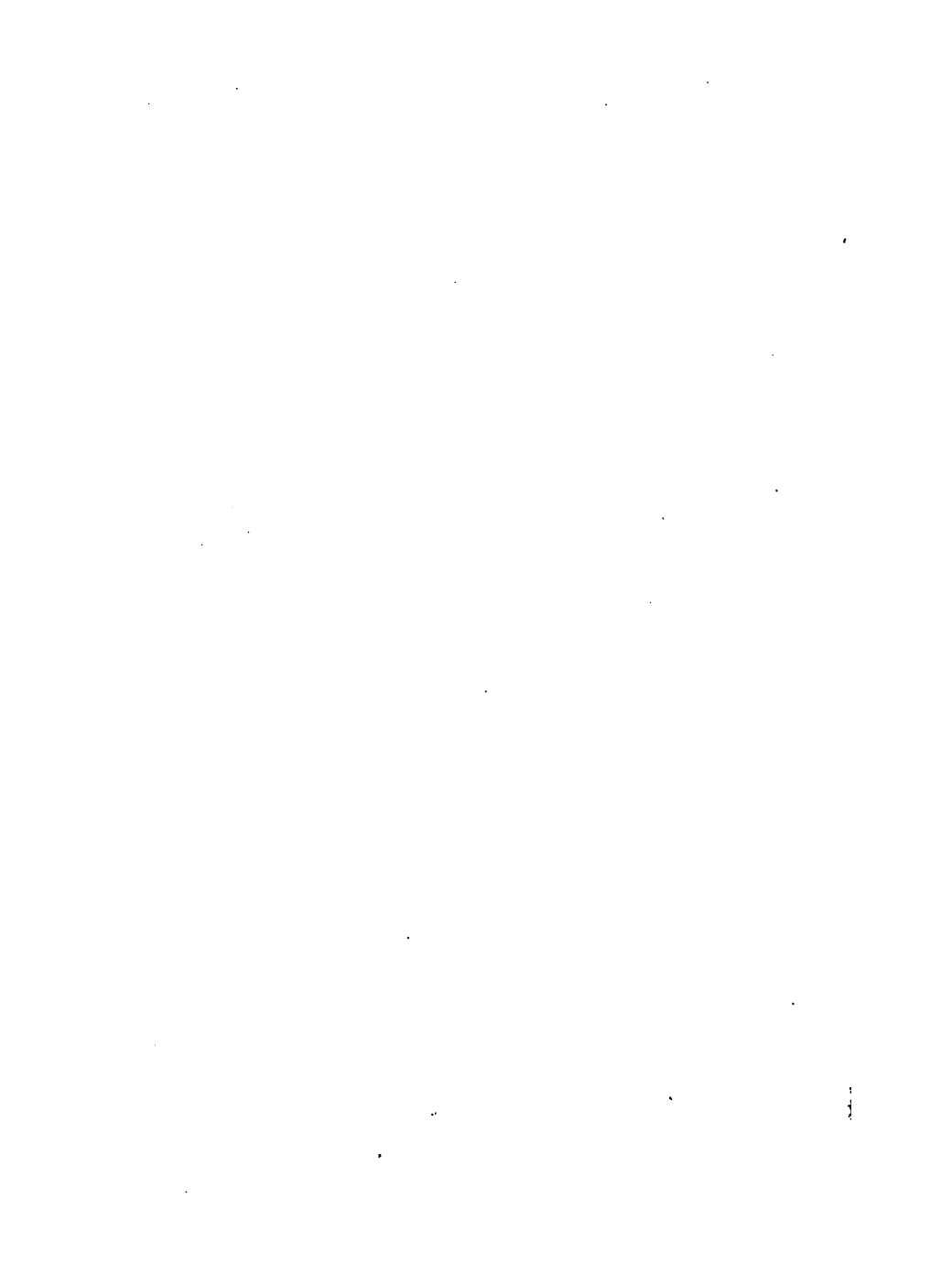
Infinite is in our home. If God is not lodged in a baby's love for father and mother, and in their love for him—why, the poor coward that Denies is right, after all. Whatever it is, whoever it is, that can evoke from my body a frail new life stronger than my own, a new soul to love me and to teach me a greater love; that can uphold me—or give me to uphold myself—when the candle of my hope goes out and I am left groping in the dark—so much I can call God. I could not call so a Power so unoccupied as to busy itself with lending me a child till it should be half my soul, and then calling in the loan to see me squirm or because He needed that gentle companionship more than I did. Whatsoever the Power is which goes by many names, and in as many dimensions as there are men, it is adequate and it is trustworthy—and trust means to trust when it is hard. And the one reason why death is bearable from outside is because life is appointed a chance to earn its rest, and because love can outlast it.

Out of his pain, the Lion wishes a good New Year to all the world. To his friends, that they be not

so hardly tested, if so may be; but that in any event they may have the mastery. To his enemies — who are next-best, for while friends share our sorrows, a good foe can help us drown them — either better eyesight (for we are all only as we see), or more muscle in their myopia. Wanton riot is out of the Lion's way; but he does not know of anything just now which could so assuage him as to have some one come along looking for trouble to some cause he loves.

To his country and to all the lands of the earth, peace with justice, content in conscience.

To the world, all and several, the best one year can bring — not, perhaps, the easiest, but the Best. If right to stay right; if wrong to be set right. And whether it is to be a good New Year or not, is in our own hands, each for himself and for so many as he can reach.





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